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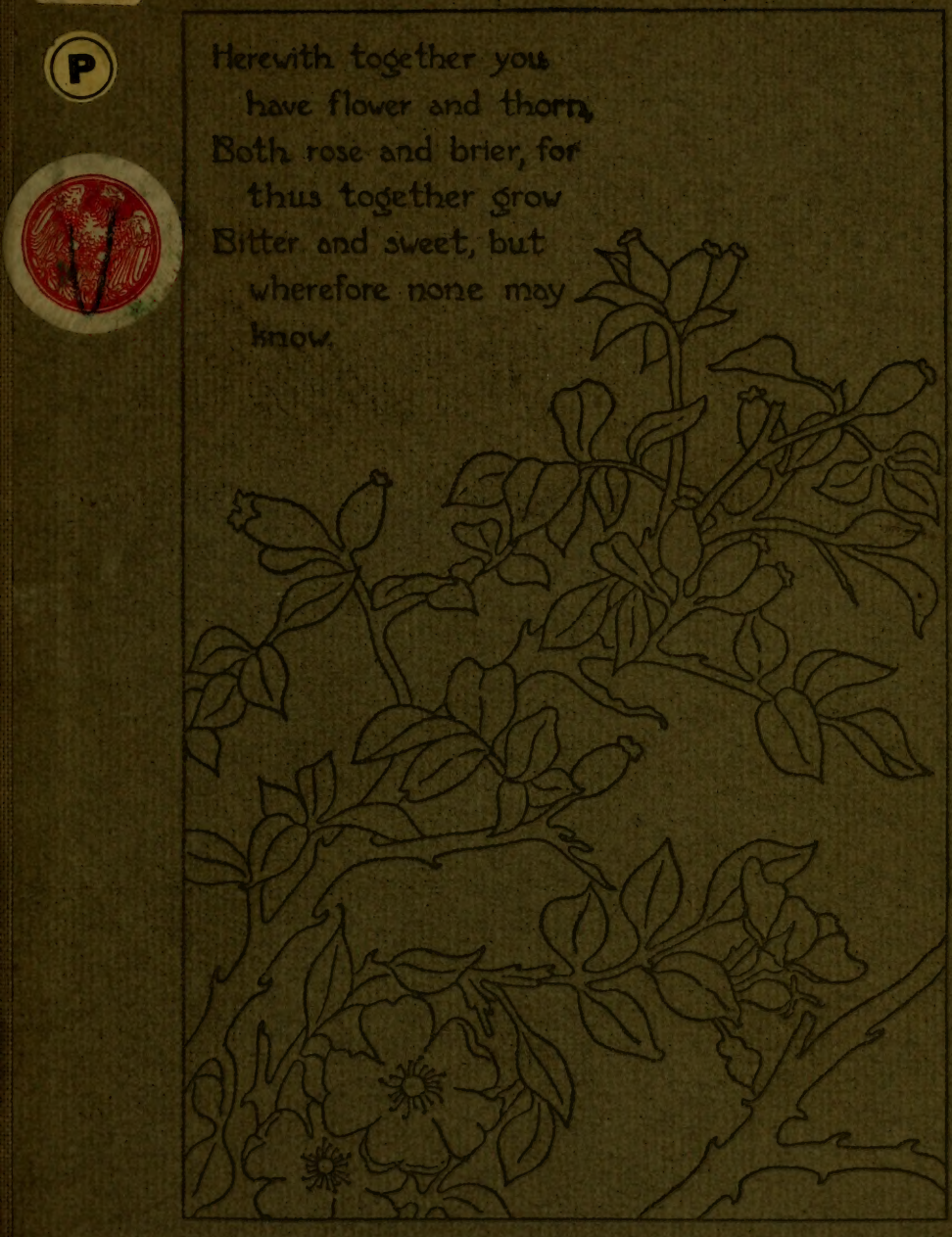
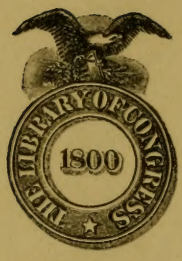

Herewith together you
have flower and thorn,
Both rose and brier, for
thus together grow
Bitter and sweet, but
wherefore none may
know.



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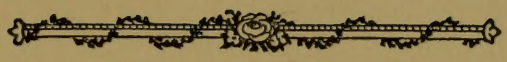

The Shadow of the Flowers

The selection of passages from Mr. Aldrich's poems that forms the *raison d'être* of this book was made in answer to a request for a list of the flowers mentioned by him, in order that the garden of the Thomas Bailey Aldrich Memorial at Portsmouth might possess every flower so mentioned. In making the list asked for, Mrs. Aldrich found the lines enclosing the flower in nearly every case so much a part of the flower itself that she copied them out, as in gathering the actual flowers of the garden she would have surrounded each with the leaves belonging to it. Quite without intention on her part, the lines, as if their sequence had been disposed by some unseen hand, were found to shadow forth subtly, yet clearly, a double story — the story of the changing seasons of the year and of the seasons of a poet's life.

The SHADOW of the FLOWERS

The SHADOW of the FLOWERS

From the Poems of
THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH

Illustrated by
TALBOT ALDRICH
and
CARL J. NORDELL

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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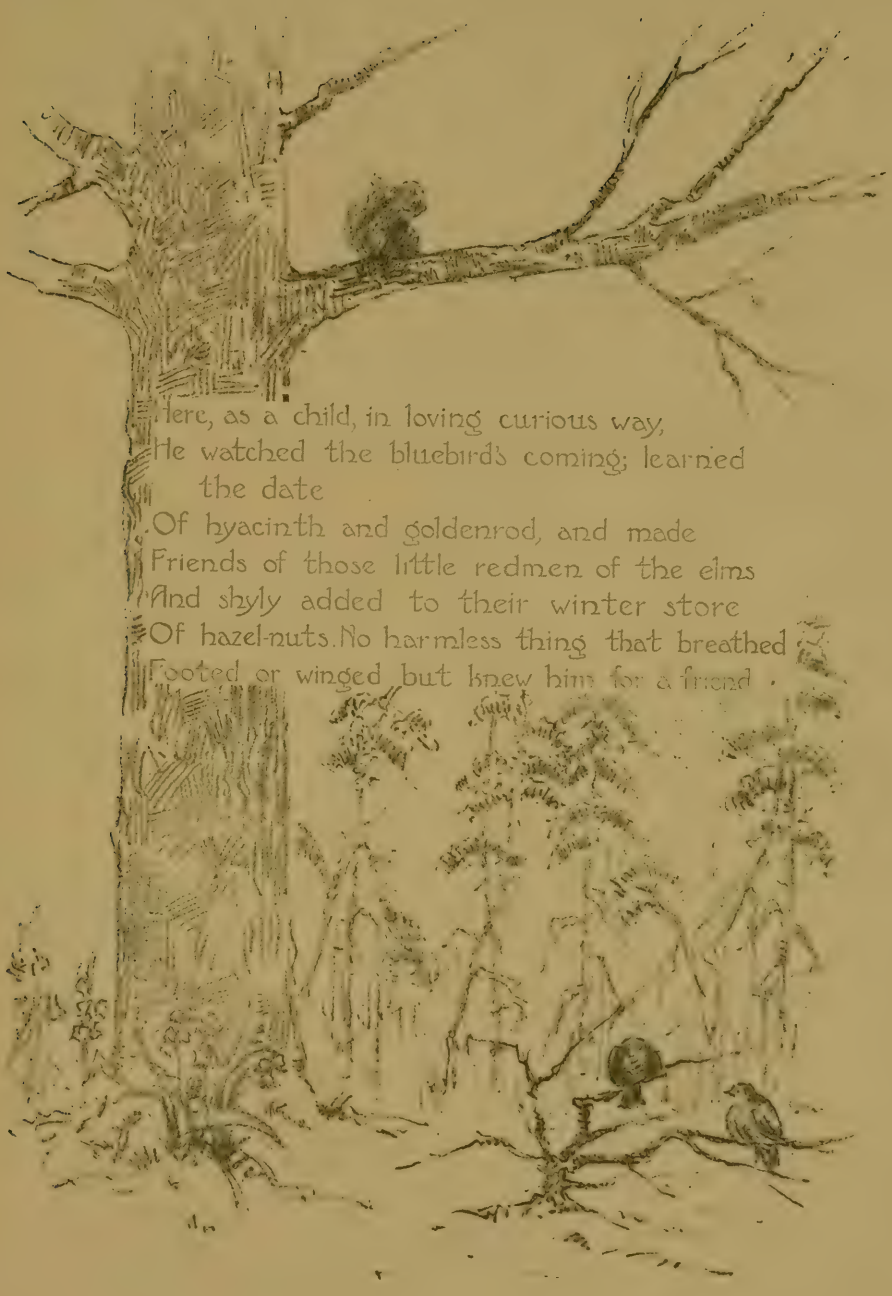
MEMORIAL GARDEN

IN THE OLD TOWN BY THE SEA

Underneath
the winter's snow
The invisible hearts of flowers
grow ripe for
blossoming!

Yet I must needs a little linger here
Each shrub and tree is eloquent of him,
For tongueless things and silence have
their speech.
This is the path familiar to his foot

Ah, happy childhood, ringed with fortunate stars
What dreams were his in this enchanted
sphere,
What intuitions of high destiny!
The honey-bees of Hybla touched his lips
In that old New World garden, unawares.



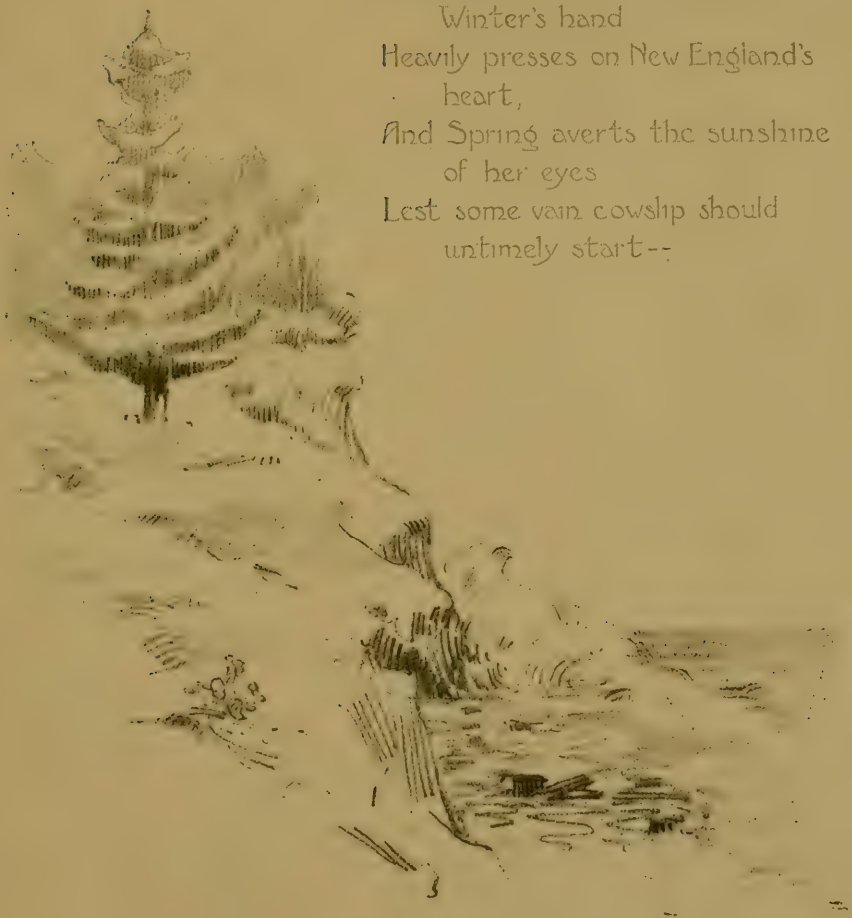
Here, as a child, in loving curious way,
He watched the bluebird's coming; learned the date
Of hyacinth and goldenrod, and made
Friends of those little redmen of the elms
And shyly added to their winter store
Of hazel-nuts. No harmless thing that breathed
Footed or winged but knew him for a friend.

When the soft
Spring gales are blowing over Cedarcroft,
Whitening the hawthorn; when the violets bloom
Along the Brandywine, and overhead
The sky is blue as Italy's, he will come
In the wind's whisper in the swaying pine,
In song of bird and blossoming of vine,
And all fair things he loved ere he was dead!

I see those lights among the leaves,
Yourselves I see, sedate and wise,
And yet some finer sense perceives
A presence that eludes the eyes.
Of what is gone there seems to stay
Some subtlety, to mock my pains.
So, when a rose is borne away,
The fragrance of the rose remains!"

How can our fancies help but go
Out from this realm of mist and
rain,
Out from this realm of sleet and
snow,

Now while the pale arbutus in the
woods
Wakes to faint life beneath the
dead year's leaves,
And the bleak North lets loose its
wailing broods
Of winds upon us, and the gray sea
grieves
Along our coast, while yet the
Winter's hand
Heavily presses on New England's
heart,
And Spring averts the sunshine
of her eyes
Lest some vain cowslip should
untimely start--



Ere spring in the heart of pansies burned,
Or the buttercup had loosed its gold.

When first the crocus thrusts its point of gold
Up through the still snow-drifted garden mould,
And folded green things in dim woods unclose
Their crinkled spears, a sudden tremor goes
Into my veins and makes me kith and kin
To every wild-born thing that thrills and blows.

While yet the year is young
Many a garland shall be hung
In our gardens of the dead,
On obelisk and urn
Shall the lilac's purple burn,
And the wild-rose leaves be shed

Upon the budded apple-trees
The robins sing by twos and threes,
And ever, at the faintest breeze,
Down drops a blossom;
And ever would that lover be
The wind that robs the burgeoned tree,
And lifts the soft trees daintily
On Beauty's bosom.

My mind lets go a thousand things,
Like dates of wars and deaths of kings
And yet recalls the very hour--
'Twas noon by yonder village tower,
And on the last blue noon in May--
The wind came briskly up this way
Crisping the brook beside the road.
Then, pausing here, set down its load
Of pine scents, and shook listlessly
Two petals from that wild rose tree

Fixed to her necklace, like another gem,
A rose she wore - the flower June made for her
Fairer it looked than when upon the stem,
And must, indeed, have been much happier

Pleasant it is to lie amid the grass
Under these shady locusts, half the day
Watching the ships reflected on the Bay,
Topmast and shroud, as in a wizard's glass;
To note the swift and meager swallow pass,
Brushing the dew drop from the lilac spray;

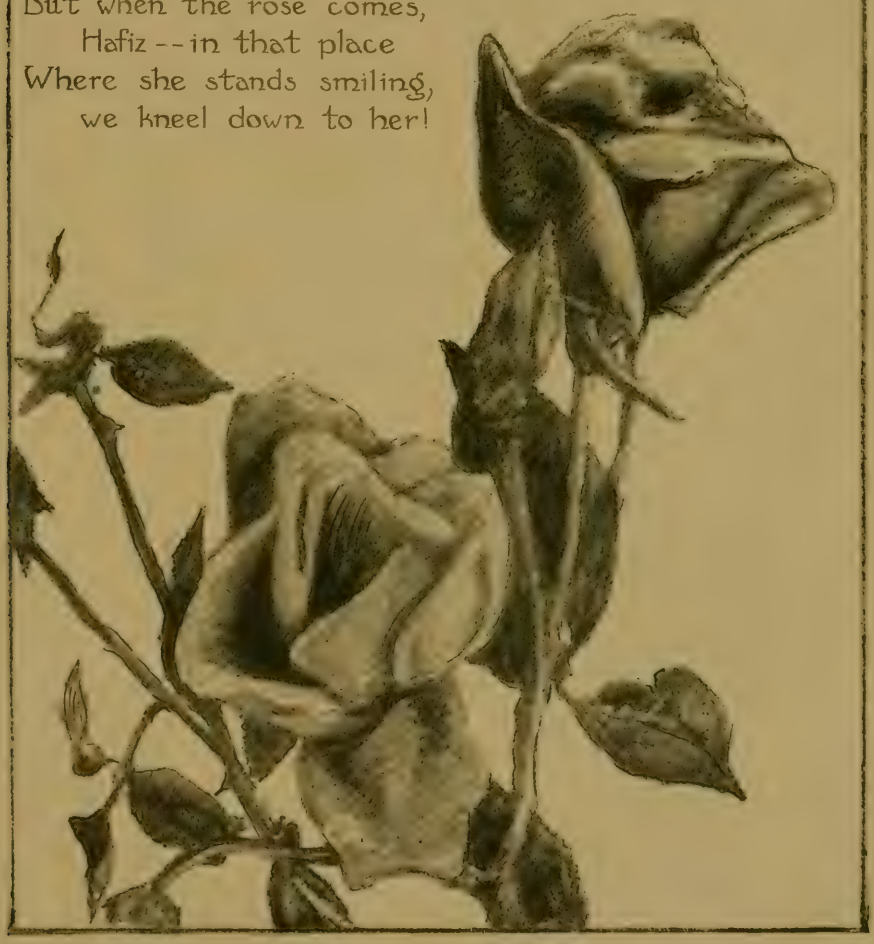
Take them and keep them,
Silvery thorn and flower,
Plucked just at random
In the rosy weather--
Snowdrops and pansies,
Sprigs of wayside heather,
And five-leaved wild-rose
Dead within an hour.

It's little that I mind
How the blossoms, pink or white
At every touch of wind
Fall a-trembling with delight;

For she has gone away,
And when she went she took
The Springtime in her look,
The peach blow on her cheek,
The laughter from the brook,
The blue from out the May—
And what she calls a week
Is forever and a day!

Up to her chamber window
A slight wire trellis goes,
And up this Romeo's ladder
Clambers a bold white rose.

Though gifts like thine the fates give not to me,
One thing, O Hafiz, we both hold in fee --
Nay, it hold us; for when the June wind blows
We both are slaves and lovers to the rose.
In vain the pale Circassian lily shows
Her face at her green lattice, and in vain
The violet beckons, with unveiled face
The bosom's white, the lips light purple stain,
These touch our liking,
yet no passion stir.
But when the rose comes,
Hafiz -- in that place
Where she stands smiling,
we kneel down to her!



What mortal knows
Whence comes the tint and odor of the rose?
What probing deep
Has ever solved the mystery of sleep?

Bid bright Flora, as she comes,
Snatch a spray of orange blooms
For a maiden's hair.

Let the Hours their aprons fill
With mignonette and daffodil,
And all that's fair.

For her bosom fetch the rose
That is rarest —

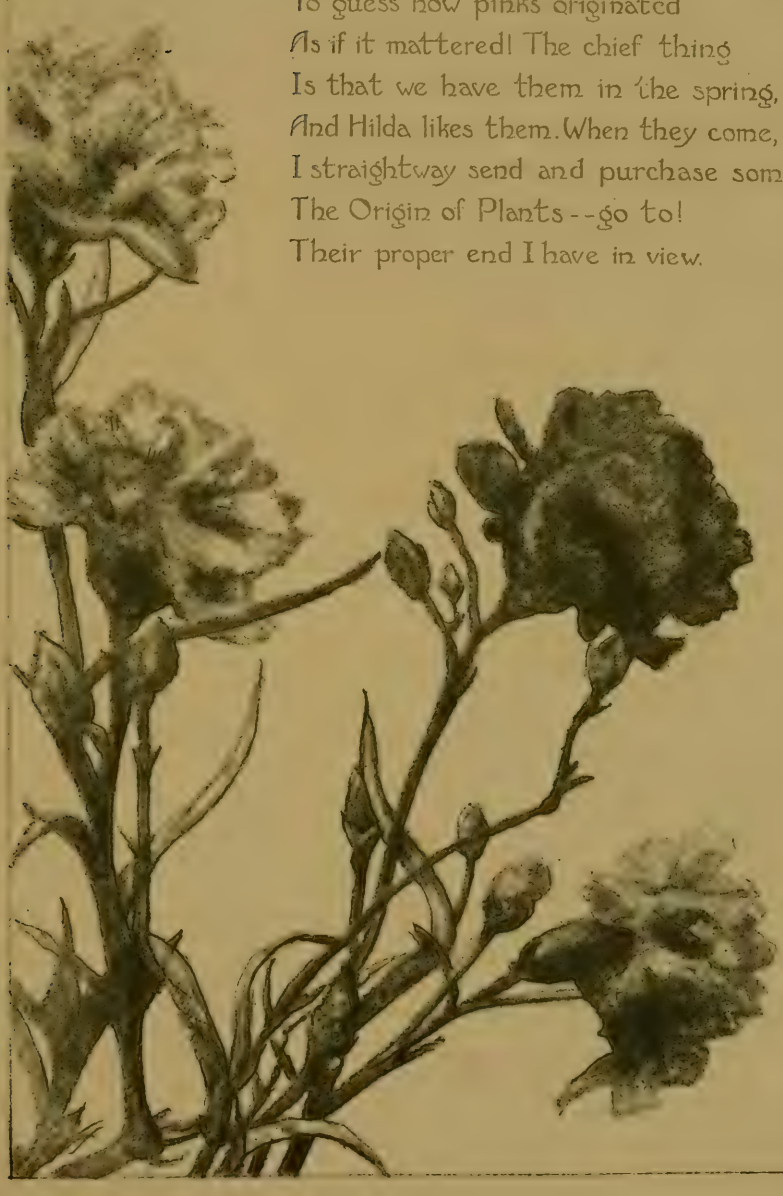
By studying my lady's eyes
I've grown so learnèd day by day
So Machiavelian in this wise,
That when I send her flowers, I say

To each small flower, (no matter what,
Geranium, pink, or tuberose,
Syringa, or forget-me-not,
Or violet) before it goes:

"Be not triumphant, little flower,
When on her haughty heart you lie,
But modestly enjoy your hour:
She'll weary of you by and by."

Each wandering wind that blows
By the lattice, seems to bear
From her parted lips the scent of the
rose,
And the jasmine from her hair

Linnaeus, avaunt! I only care
To know what flower she wants to wear
I leave it to the addle-pated
To guess how pinks originated
As if it mattered! The chief thing
Is that we have them in the spring,
And Hilda likes them. When they come,
I straightway send and purchase some,
The Origin of Plants--go to!
Their proper end I have in view.



I like not lady slippers,
Nor yet the sweet-pea
blossoms,
Nor yet the flaky roses,
Red, or white as snow;
I like the chaliced lilies,
The heavy Eastern lilies,
The gorgeous tiger lilies,
That in our garden grow.

And when the rain is falling,
I sit beside the window
And watch them glow and glisten,
How they burn and glow!
Oh for the burning lilies,
The tender Eastern lilies,
The gorgeous tiger lilies,
That in our garden grow.

And lo! in the meadow sweet
Was the grave of a little child,
With a crumbling stone at the feet,
And the ivy running wild--
Tangled ivy and clover
Folding it over and over:
Close to my sweetheart's feet
Was the little mound up-piled.

A little mound with chipped headstone,
The grass, ah me! uncut about the sward
Summer by summer left alone
With one white lily keeping watch and
ward.

I think of it in the city's streets,
I dream of it when I rest--
The violet eyes, the waxen hands,
And the one white rose on the breast!

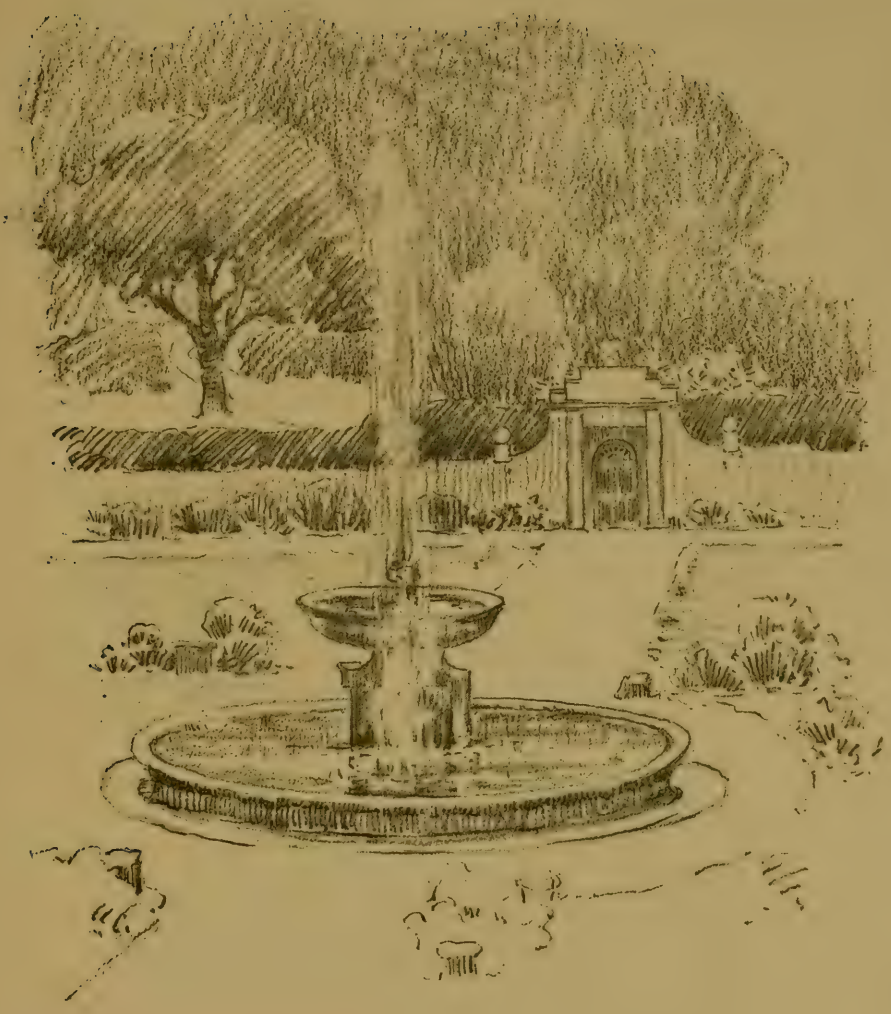
Ere the moon begins to rise
Or a star to shine,
All the bluebells close their eyes-
So close thine,
Thine, dear, thine!

Then night comes, and the stars,
And blissful sleep. But ere the birds were
called
By bluebell chimes (unheard of mortal ear)
To matins in their branch-hung priories—

To think that now, beneath the Italian skies,
In such clear air as this, by Tiber's wave,
Daisies are trembling over Keats's grave.

Once more I halt in Andalusian Pass,
To list the mule-bells jingling on the height;
Below, against the dull esparto grass,
The almonds glimmer white.

Where is she
Of the fleur-de-lys,
And that true knight who wore her gages?
. . . . . .
All is dead here.
Poppies are red here,
Vines in my lady's chamber grow—



The breezes blur the fountain's glass,
And make aeolian melodies,
And scatter from the scented trees
The lemon-blossoms on the grass.

Thou know'st that garden by the mosque
Of Irma; stately palms are there,
And silver fish in marble tanks,
And scents of jasmine in the air–

The Presence vanished, and the flask
was brought
Slender, bell-mouthed, and painted all around
With jet-black tulips on a saffron ground.

In the cloisteral garden all on fire
With scarlet poppies and golden stalks
Here and there on the sunny walks,
Startled by some slight sound we made,
A lizard, awaking from its swoon,
Shot like an arrow into the shade.

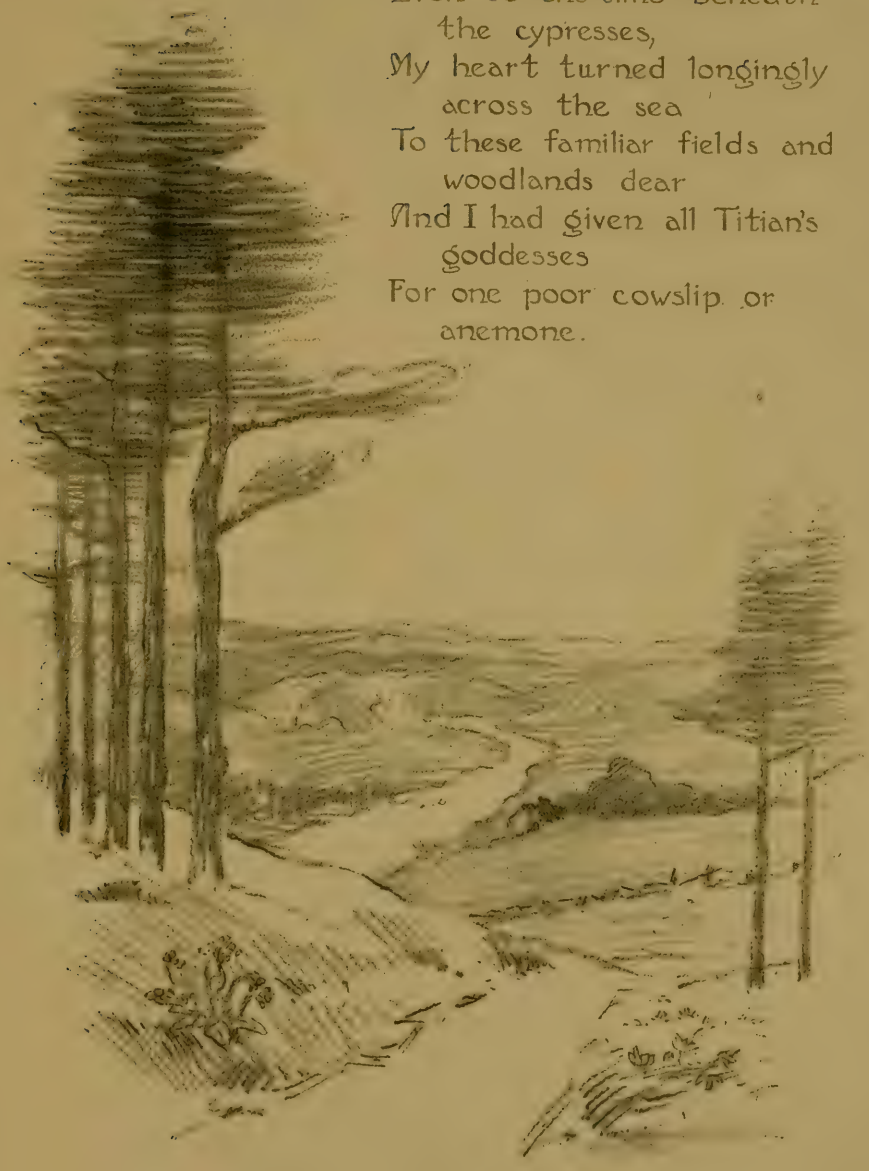
Tawny flower of Spain,
Wild rose of Granada,
Keeper of the wines
In this old posada.

And now I linger in green English lanes,
By garden-plots of rose and heliotrope,
And now I face the sudden pelting rains
On some lone Alpine slope.

Ho, eglantine and cresses
For her tresses!--
Let Care, the beggar, wait
Outside the gate,

Tears if you will – but after
Mirth and laughter;
Then folded hands on breast
And endless rest.–

Who can say where Echo dwells?
In some mountain cave, methinks,
Where the white owl sits and blinks;
Or in deep sequestered dells,
Where the foxglove hangs its bells
Echo dwells.
Echo!
Echo!
Phantom of the crystal Air,
Daughter of sweet Mystery!
Here is one has need of thee,
Lead him to thy secret lair,
Myrtle brings he for thy hair---
Hear his prayer,
Echo!
Echo!



Even so one time beneath
the cypresses,
My heart turned longingly
across the sea
To these familiar fields and
woodlands dear
And I had given all Titian's
goddesses
For one poor cowslip or
anemone.

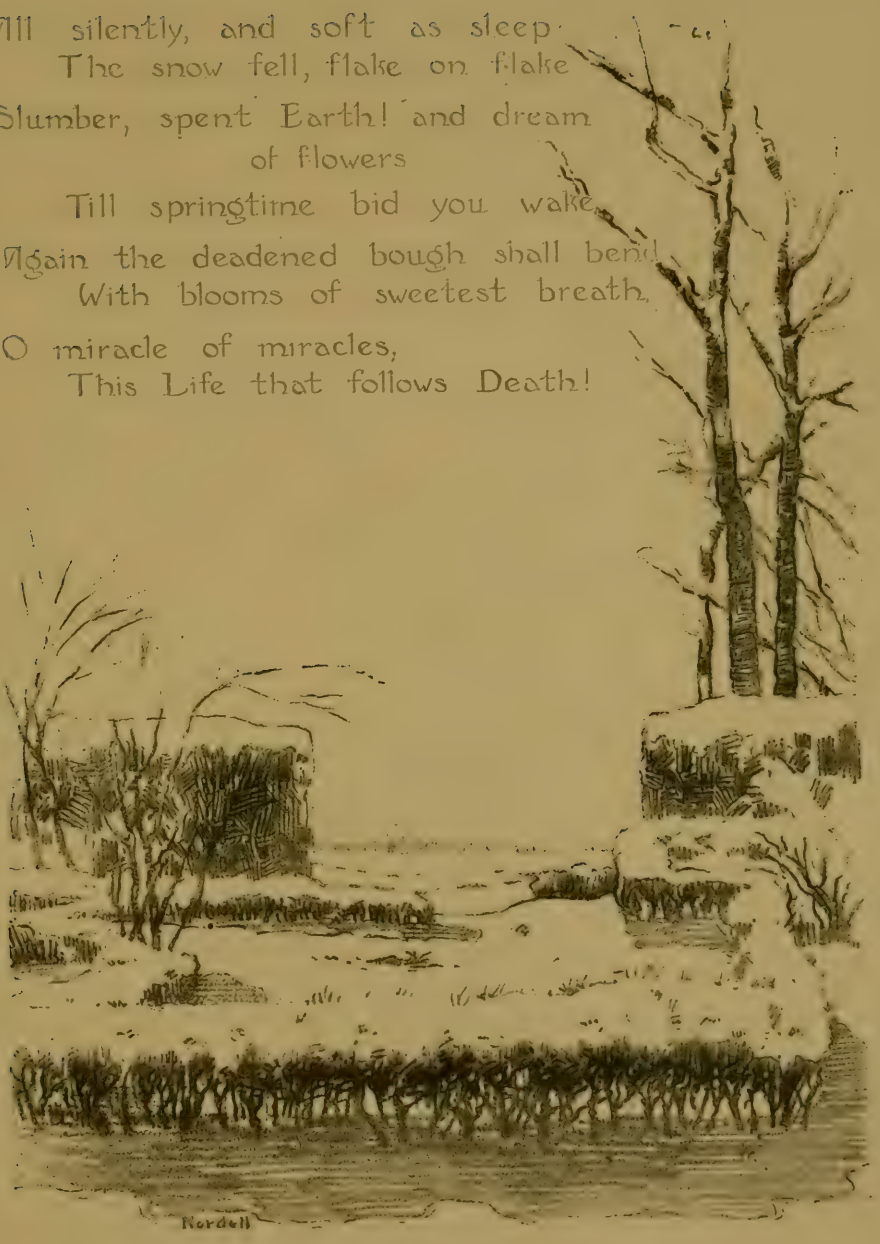
The busy shuttle comes and goes
Across the rhymes, and deftly weaves
A tissue out of autumn leaves,
With here a thistle, there a rose.

"The small green grapes in heavy clusters grew,
Feeding on mystic moonlight [illegible]
And amber sunshine, the long summer through,

"Till, with faint tremor in her veins, the Vine
Felt the delicious pulses of the [illegible]
And, the grapes ripened in the [illegible].

The garden walks
Were choked with leaves, and on their
ragged biers
Lay dead the sweets of summer ---
damask rose,
Clove pink, old fashioned, loved New
England flowers.

All silently, and soft as sleep
The snow fell, flake on flake
Slumber, spent Earth! and dream
of flowers
Till springtime bid you wake
Again the deadened bough shall bend
With blooms of sweetest breath
O miracle of miracles,
This Life that follows Death!



Thou that dost hold the priceless gift of rest,
Strew lotus leaf and poppy on his breast,

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